

REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated June 30, 2003. Claims 1-18 were pending, with claims 1-12, 16 and 17 having been withdrawn by the Patent Office from consideration. By this amendment, claims 1-12 and 16-18 have been canceled, without disclaimer or prejudice to pursue the claims in one or more divisional or continuation applications, claims 13 and 14 have been amended and new claims 19-27 have been added. Accordingly, claims 13-15 and 19-27 are presented for examination, with claims 13, 15 and 19 being in independent form.

Claim 14 was objected to because one or more claim terms purportedly lack proper antecedent basis.

Claim 14 has been amended hereby to place the claim in better form for examination and to clarify the claimed invention. It is submitted that no new matter has been added by the present amendment.

It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 14 has proper antecedent basis, and therefore withdrawal of the objection is requested.

Claims 13-15 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,050,183 to Tanaka et al.

Applicants have carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claims 13 and 15 are patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

This application relates to methods of preparing a heat-sensitive stencil. As discussed in the application at pages 1-2, it is conventionally known to prepare a heat-sensitive stencil by forming a porous resin layer on a thermoplastic resin film. The stencil is produced by applying,

to a surface of the thermoplastic resin film, a coating liquid containing a resin dissolved in a mixed solvent of a first solvent capable of dissolving the resin and a second solvent substantially incapable of dissolving the resin. The applied coating liquid is then heated to dryness. The resulting stencil unfortunately has the problem that the porous resin layer easily separates from the thermoplastic resin film. In addition, the stencil has a high level of stiffness in humid conditions, so that transferability of the stencil in the printer is not fully satisfactory.

Independent claims 13, 15 and 19 relate to methods of preparing a heat-sensitive stencil comprising a porous resin layer, a resin film laminated on the porous resin layer, and a thin resin layer interposed between the porous resin layer and the resin film. For example, a method of preparing a heat-sensitive stencil comprising a porous resin layer, a resin film laminated on the porous resin layer, and a thin resin layer interposed between the porous resin layer and the resin film, according to independent claim 19, comprises applying a wet coating composition to a releasable surface, the wet composition containing a resin, a first solvent capable of dissolving the resin, and a second solvent substantially incapable of dissolving the resin, drying the applied composition to form the thin resin layer and the porous resin layer simultaneously as a continuous unitary body on the releasable surface, separating the unitary body formed by the thin resin layer and the porous resin layer from the releasable surface, and bonding the resin film to the thin resin layer of the unitary body.

Applicants found that a heat-sensitive stencil wherein a thin resin layer is interposed between a porous resin layer and a resin film allows tight bonding of the porous resin layer and has satisfactory flexural rigidity. Applicants also found that additional optional features that may be added to enhance these advantages. For example, the method may further include forming a non-resinous porous layer on the porous resin layer. As another example, the resin film may have

at least one resin component which is the same as that of the thin resin layer, and/or the thin resin layer may have at least one resin component which is the same as that of the porous resin layer.

Tanaka simply does not disclose or suggest methods of preparing a heat-sensitive stencil wherein a thin resin layer is interposed between a porous resin layer and a resin film. Tanaka also fails to suggest that a heat-sensitive stencil produced through such methods would have such beneficial advantages.

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 13, 15 and 19, and claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art.

The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition, and the Commissioner is authorized to charge the requisite fees to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Entry of this amendment and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Teng, Reg. No. 40,837
Attorney for Applicants
Cooper & Dunham LLP
Tel.: (212) 278-0400